

INTRODUCTION

Indian population is composed of groups of diverse backgrounds. Some of these groups are large enough and are well known, while some others are comparatively small or lesser known and living in segregation or relatively separation. From the very ancient period the rich society, economy and culture of India attracted restless tribes, conquerors, merchants and travellers of different creeds who did much to shape India's turbulent history. India is known for its different religious minorities among them Muslims are very significant one. Being a principal minority and lesser-known community, the Muslims of India deserve social and scientific research but unfortunately research studies on them are quite scanty.

The spread of Islam and the development of Muslims in India were a multi-layered phenomenon and followed different patterns in different regions of the country¹. The bulk of the Muslims in India have been drawn from the miscellaneous segments of the Indian population. It was spread by other means rather by the sword and the conversion to the faith (Islam) was not a sudden switchover of faith. It was a process of two ways. In one way, Islam itself undergoes a change in the process of converting the Hindus or others and on the other the former may change to suit the latter². India, from the ancient periods with its hard shaped peninsula is compassed by two great natural barriers, the mountain wall of Himalayas and the sea. But these could not keep her completely isolated from the rest of the world. The Khyber and the other mountain pass in the north-west and sea routes in the south have come, the armed conquerors, restless tribes, merchants and travellers who did much to shape India's turbulent history. Long before the coming of the Muslims, there were the Aryans from Central Asia, Greek, Scythians, Parthians, Kushan, Huns and others who not only invaded

India but also merged themselves with the people with their rich cultural heritage and from the composite structure variations.

During the early times Muslims entered into the gigantic triangle of India by three main entrances. First, there is the sea and by this open door only peaceful penetration of Islam was done by the Arab merchants from Hadramawt and Iraq. Secondly, there is the land entrance from Mesopotamia and south Persia through Baluchistan, south of the mountains of Makran and Sindh. Arab armies only once succeed in effecting a successful entry by it into India. And the third entrance is through the Khyber Pass on the north-west frontier through which thousands of groups from various origins and backgrounds have passed down³.

Muhammad Bin Qassim was considered the first Muslim invader of India but the real credit for establishing a Muslim rule in India goes to Muhammad Ghori, who invaded India in 1191. There followed a succession of dynasties extending to the end of the Mughal era in 1857, a span of nearly 666 years⁴. However, Muslim interaction with India had begun much earlier. According to some of the historians, Muslim expeditions were sent to the west coast of India during the caliphate of Umar (A.D. 634-644). It is also said that the governor of Oman, Ath-Thaquafi, sent a naval expedition to Thane near present day Mumbai in the year 637 A.D. According to Al-Baladhuri, Uthman was the first Caliph who planned to invade India as the early caliphs considered such an invasion a solemn religious duty⁵. However, it is not an actual truth that Islam was spread in India by the sword or military occupation. The spread of Islam was multi-layered phenomenon and followed different patterns in different regions of the country. We should also consider the peaceful penetration of Islam in India by the Arab traders, religious devotees, preachers and Sufi saints. With the strong appeal of the democratic social system of Islam, the downtrodden people of the depressed caste of Hinduism gradually accepted the new faith. And it is to be believed that the Muslim

population of India are the result of the methods of peaceful penetration and constant efforts from religious missionaries⁶.

Many of the present-day historians believed that Islam first came into India in the western coast of Kerala during the lifetime of Prophet Mohammed himself. And Prophet Mohammed is said to have sent messengers to the Roman (Byzantine) Emperor, the Persian Emperors and to the kings of China and Kerala. In this phase of history of Islam, it was still a missionary religion. And the *Jehad* or the religious obligation to converts was started off a few decades later⁷. Islam was introduced to some parts of western coast of India and Sind by the Arab traders because trade relations between Arabia and Indian sub-continent were very ancient. The Arabs were the people who, in these regions long before the advent of Islam and in the wake of an Arabians invasion of Sind led by Mahammad Bin Qassim in 711 A. D. maintained the commercial routes between India and Europe. Many of these early Muslim Arabian traders married the local women and their offspring spread in different parts of that area. A number of local peoples living in the coastal areas of Kerala were moved by the principles of Islam and got converted. These traders had a great influence in the establishment of Muslim settlements and spread of the new faith on the western coast of India⁸.

However, the peaceful spread of Islam was suddenly changed when the *Jehad* started off and the army of Islam secured victory after victory over all the prominent empires of those days. The Arab occupation of Sind started in the year A.D. 711, only seventy-nine years after the death of Prophet Mahammad. Hijjaj bin Yasuf, the governor of Basarah sends his armies under the leadership of a young Umayyad general Imaduddin Muhammad Bin Qassim for occupation of Sind. He captured the whole of the lower Indus valley and established a powerful kingdom which became the eastern most prominence of Umayyad caliphate. In the second half of the tenth century, a series of strong attacks was launched by

the Mahammad of Ghazni (971-1031), who swept across northern India down to Gujrat. Mahammad throughout these successive attacks between c.1001-c.1031 A.D., only ransacked and plundered the country and forcibly converted the people into Islam. After the death of the Ghazni, Muhammad Ghori succeeded him. Nearly after a gap of 160 years, Ghori invaded India with a massive army. His occupation is significant as it was the beginning of the continuous Muslim rule in India on a durable basis. He extended his reign up to Bengal. He appointed a Turk slave Qutub-uddin-Aibak as the governor of his newly captured Indian territory and established first Muslim dynasty in India⁹. This eventually led to the establishments of the Delhi Sultanate. The Sultanate was in constant flux as five dynasties rose and fell namely Mamluk or Slave (c.1206-90), Khalji (c.1290-1320), Tughluq (c.1320-1413), Sayyed (c.1414-51) and Lodi (c.1451-1526). Thus, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, there was the emergence of Muslim community in India. By the end of the 16th century, the Delhi Sultanate was replaced by the Mughal. Since then, until the coming of the British, India remained a Muslim kingdom.

All the above historical facts clearly revealed that the Muslim rulers in India adopted both the militant method and peaceful proselytising method for conversion of the people to the Muslim faith¹⁰. During the total period of Islamic rule, thousands of Muslim immigrants settled all over the India and their numbers were swelled by local converts. Trade served as an important passage for the spread of Islam in Indian peninsula as much before the era of Muslim rules west Asia merchants came to Malabar and other Indian coastal parts to purchase spice and aromatic woods. They were not only enterprising merchants but also devoted preachers to spread the message of Islam in India¹¹. However, the movement that did play an important role in spreading of Islam was Sufism. It is neither a separate religion nor a sect. It is particular and distinctive Muslim way or life born of the human heart against the ritualism or the Muslim orthodoxy¹². The Sufi movement also attracted followers from the

artisan and untouchable communities of India. They played a crucial role in bridging the distance between Islam and the indigenous traditions.

The building up of Muslim society in Bengal was a long process of gradual growth. Islam entered in Bengal both by land and water. By the land Turkish conquerors come with their religion and culture, while the Arab traders come through the waterway. About the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century, Bakhtiyar Khilji, a Turkish general of the Delhi Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak, marched into Bihar and Bengal. He defeated Lakshman Sen of the Sen Dynasty and conquered large parts of Bengal. His military exploits in the east resulted in conversions to Islam. With the military occupation of Delhi by the Mughals, a fresh wave of Muslim migration into Bengal started¹³. These stream of Muslim invaders from various corners led expeditions and converted the common masses as well some Hindu Rajas respectively. These newly converted Muslim rulers and other officials played one of the most vital roles to propagate Islam and to constitute Muslim society in Bengal either by establishing alliances or by the mass conversions of the indigenous peoples¹⁴. At the initial period, the propagation of Islam was not strictly guided by the principles of Islamic rules in Bengal and some wrong interpretations influenced the socio-religious life of the Muslim to a great extent. The general unawareness of Islam and pre-Islamic cultural traditions constituted a complex cultural pattern among the Muslim of Bengal and moreover, the traditions of the immigrant Muslim groups enriched the Muslim society of Bengal during the course of time¹⁵.

Islam, which came in the wake of the Turkish conquest, changed the socio-religious pattern of Bengal. Politically, it sowed the needs of Muslim rule, but socially it planted a Muslim society, opening the gate of Bengal to numerous immigrants from the then Muslim world. The Muslim rulers and officials played a great role to propagate Islam and to constitute the Muslim society either by establishing marriage alliances with local people or by mass conversion of the indigenous communities¹⁶. At the time of the Muslim conquest,

Bengal was pre-dominantly a Hindu-Buddhist country. The proportion of Hindus and Buddhist cannot be ascertained, but it is a fact that Buddhist ruled Bengal for several centuries. Moreover, non-Aryan elements were always present in Bengal, particularly outside the urban centres and Buddhism which was up rooted from land of its birth had been a great competitor of Hinduism on the eve of the Muslim conquest. The non-Aryan elements had somehow identified themselves with the Buddhists and these when Hindu-Buddhist rivalry was very much present in the society. Islam came as a relieving force, in which many found an opening salvation and success. This probably led to the conversion of local people to Islam.

The portion of West Bengal, which stretches from Ganges on the south and the Himalayas on the North, is physically known as North Bengal. The region covers the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan areas as well as the plains stretching over 21332 sq.km and surrounded by Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan to the North; Bihar to West; Assam to East and Bangladesh and rest of the West Bengal to south. It consists of six districts viz. Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Bihar¹⁷. Due to lack of research studies and historical documents, the historical backgrounds of the Muslims of North Bengal are unknown. However, the only available information is from the reviews of some early works done by the scholars. Muslim occupation into this region was dated back much earlier¹⁸. Bakhtiyar Khalji's invasion to *Kamrup* had initiated the penetration of Muslim political forces into this region. During the year 1661 with the help of Vishnunarayan, the eldest son of Pranarayan who had embraced Islam, Mir Jumla occupied the then Cooch Bihar and changed the name into Alamgir Nagar. The political intrusion of these early Muslim invaders and leaders brought many Muslims in these areas to domicile. Establishment of political relations with the local kings had also facilitated many Muslim officials, intellectuals, army personnel, traders, artisans and various occupational groups to

immigrate into these regions. Many Muslim saints and Sufi's had also come to these regions and established their Khanqahs or Mazars to preach their religious and spiritual teachings. These Sufi saints had played a great role to proselytize the local peoples into Islam. Some converted influential local people later influenced many others to embrace Islam. Ali Mech and Kalapahar were the most famous among them. Their roles in propagation and expansion of Islam were very significant¹⁹.

Statement of the Problem:

The building up of Muslim society in Bengal was a long process of gradual growth. The composition of the society quite naturally differed from century to century with the immigration of foreign Muslim and the conversion of local people. At the initial period, the propagation of Islam was not strictly guided by the principles of Islamic rules in Bengal and some wrong interpretations influenced the socio-religious life of the Muslim to a great extent. The general ignorance of Islam and pre-Islamic cultural traditions constituted a complex cultural pattern among the Muslim of Bengal and moreover, the traditions of the immigrant Muslim groups enriched the Muslim society of Bengal during the course of time. Muslims constitute the second largest group in India (13.4%) and thus the largest religious minority according to the 2001 census. India's Muslims population is amongst the largest in the world, exceeded only by Indonesia's numerically, the majority of the Muslim's in India are living in four state's Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Maharashtra which had at least ten million Muslim's each. Uttar Pradesh has the largest population in India with 22% of India's Muslim's living there according to the 2001 census and the state west Bengal has a Muslim population of about 25.2% according to 2001 census. They are not only a minority in numerical strength but also in terms of their socio-economic and political status. They are a backward community in terms of their education and participation in political and public affairs.

Looking into the *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal, it has been discovered that the great number of Muslims of North Bengal was *Nashya Sheikh*. The *Nashya Sheikhs*, a numerically dominant Muslim Community resided in the sub-Himalayan North Bengal. It has synonymous names like *Nashya or Rajbansi Musalman*. They are mainly distributed over the northern districts of West Bengal, Particularly in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. Some of them are also found in North and South Dinajpur as well as in Malda. This community in general were local converts of Rajbangsi, Polia, Koch, Mech community etc. Originally the Rajbangshi muslims were converted from Hindu society and they entitle *Nashya Sheikh*. In this regard we have to mention the eminent writer's view about *Nashya Sheikh*. Panchanan Barma, an eminent Rajbangsi leader in colonial North Bengal noticed the conversion of Rajbangshi's into *Nashya Sheikh* in large numbers, since the heydays of his career as an advocate. It was only a few decades before the Independence that the *Nashyas* were in masse exposed to and influenced by the process of Islamization. As a result, in recent times, they are integrated with the structural framework of Muslim society in Bengal. But they still retain many elements of their pre-Islamic past (tradition) which gave them a unique identity. Considering their ethnic origin, social history, cultural attributes and retention of many elements of pre-Islamic traditions the *Nashya Sheikh* Community are not favourably looked upon by other Muslims (Asraf or Khas) of the region. It may once again be emphasized that socio-economic backwardness and political alienation have given rise to some important questions as far as this minority community is concerned. After six decades of independence, *Nashya Sheikhs* Community in West Bengal is lagging behind other communities in terms of socio-economic condition and political representation. Being a rural community in the context of West Bengal, they are bound to be socio-economically deprived. Their political participation in mainstream politics is minimal. *Nashya Sheikhs* are under-represented in the parliament and state legislature. Their participation in the political process

did not increase to the extent that it should have since the inception of the first general election. Their political involvement is also less in proportion with their population share in the state. Democracy has no meaning if minorities are not secure and also do not get proper share in economic, social and political development in proportion to their population. However, it needs to be pointed out that without political empowerment, socio-economic development of Muslims will be a utopian approach and vice versa.

Overview of Literature:

It has been mentioned in the above statement of the problem that there are no plenty of books or research work done on the topic. However, some works related to the Muslim community in Bengal and North Bengal in particular are discussed below.

Sukumar Baraiby his work on *Local History of North Bengal*, attempts to highlight some aspects of North Bengal relating to the study of Socio-Cultural and Political arena of the area. North Bengal is the virgin land of research work. In this work, readers will taste some interesting research papers on Socio-Cultural and Political fields of North Bengal. The readers will be able to understand that in spite of their oppressiveness, the local Zamindars left their contributions in the different fields of social activities. The book expects to evolve many undisguised and unknown aspects of socio-Cultural and Political phenomenon of the area of North Bengal which has been analysed in the historical perspective going through local sources and extensive field work without any biases and prejudices.

Amzad Hossain, *Kamrup Theke Kochbehar, (in Bengali)*, (Ed.), the Book of North Bengal, is a compendium of 23 articles which mentions the history of Kamrup to Cooch Behar (North Bengal) and East Bengal (Presently Bangladesh). In this article, the history of the Koch dynasty during the period of the 16th century is discussed and also analyses polity, culture and socio-economic conditions of the peoples. There is also indication the Royal

family of the Koch kingdom, the Princely state of Cooch Behar is the foothills and foothills of the Eastern Himalayas in North-East India. In the change of time today Cooch Behar is a district of West Bengal in India. This palace has a long History but the author do not discuss the history of *Nashya Sheikh*.

Pasarul Alam, *Uttarbanger Anagrasar Muslim Somaj* (in Bengali), is an excellent attempt on the study of the Muslims of North Bengal. The author has meticulously discussed the area with stimulus data. The author also discussed about the various Muslim groups of the Bengal. He also mentioned the origin of Muslims of North Bengal and socio-economic, political, education and cultural life of the Muslims of North Bengal. The book briefly mentions the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims of North Bengal but he did not properly write the historical way.

Sailen Debnath, *Essay on Cultural History of North Bengal*, adequately reflects together the important cultural aspects and profile of people's culture of North Bengal in the stream changes in the duration of the course of history from the remote past to the present, but the author did not mention *Nashya Sheikh* Community.

Seikh Rahim Mondal, 'Emerging Ethnicity Identity among the *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal,' in Bhadra, R. K, Bhadra, Mira (Ed.), *Ethnicity, Movement and Social structure contested cultural Identity* mentions about the *Nashya Sheikh* community of sub-Himalayan North Bengal specially of the three districts, such as Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling Districts of West Bengal. He tried to show the origin and development of the *Nashya Shaikh* community to the rest of the people of North Bengal. The author also had mentioned the Ethnicity and Identity of *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal in Sociological perspective. But he didn't try to show the issue of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community from a historical point of view.

M.K.A. Siddique, (Ed.) the book *Marginal Muslim Communities in India*, has given detail information about 40 marginal Muslim communities. This book is a result of project work that was undertaken in 1999. According to the author recent survey of India under the project “peoples of India” shows that there are 150-200 Marginal Muslim communities existing in India. These communities are spread all over India and they varied socio-cultural, linguistic and ethnic background.

P.K. Bhattacharyya, (Ed.), *The Kingdom of Kamata Koch Behar in Historical Perspective*, Ratna Prakashan in Association with University of North Bengal, is a compendium of 18 papers presented at a national seminar organized in 1996 under the auspices of North Bengal University. The papers covered are broadly socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic perspectives of Kamata Koch Bihar (modern day Cooch Behar). The papers, well-researched and documented, throw a great deal of light on the history of Kamata Koch Behar from accounts of foreign travellers, role of the princely state, role of commissioners as British agents, cultural imperialism in British India, role of religious evolution in Koch Behar including the contributions of the Brahmo religion and Satyapir in cementing Hindu-Muslim unity. The cultural efflorescence brought about by the royal family was duly taken note of innovative steps like introduction of lottery for developmental purposes, use of temple and religious endowments, changing agrarian system - all point to the concern for the people. The efforts at Hinduization of tribes with particular reference to Rajbanshi's have also been dwelt on. But he did not mention the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims of North Bengal.

Sekh Rahim Mondal, in another book, *Educational Status of Muslims, Problems, Prospects, and Priorities* has described the educational condition of the Muslim of West Bengal. The author has conducted study in six villages of West Bengal and tried to trace the reasons of Muslims ' educational backwardness. He has described the relevance of education in Islam. He is of the view that education is the key to the progress of any community.

According to the 1991 census the overall literacy rate of West Bengal is 52.11%, male literacy rate is 63.66% and female literacy rate is 39.42%. Muslims literacy rate is 34%. The enrolment ratio is low and the dropout rate is very high among Muslims. The author has found during his study of West Bengal that educational status of Muslims is very depressing poverty and ignorance are the main reason of educational backwardness of Muslim community in India. Muslim community is lagging behind to the Hindus in the field of Education.

Seikh Rahim Mondal, his other book of Muslim society of West Bengal is *Dynamics of Muslim Society*. The author of 'Dynamics of Muslim Society' has divided the main theme of his book into two parts. The first part discussed about social structure and organization of Muslim Community of west Bengal, where he explains about social structure of Muslims and Islamic social organization patterns. And in the second part, he analysed the social dynamics structure of Muslim society of west Bengal and tried to comparative studies with the other Communities of that time. But he didn't specify about the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal, as well as West Bengal.

Ranjit Dasgupta, *Economy, Society and Politics of Bengal: Jalpaiguri (1869-1947)* is a famous book of North Bengal. This book highlights nicely the society, economy, culture and politics of Jalpaiguri district (in North Bengal) since its formation till the partition of India, this work is one more addition to the burgeoning literature on regional-local history in India. He also mentions the Muslims of North Bengal but did not mention *Nashya Sheikhs* of Jalpaiguri.

Charu Chandra Sanyal, in his monumental work of North Bengal, *The Rajbangsi's of North Bengal*, is an important and significant work historically and anthropologically the culture, politics, society, custom, occupation are everything described here. Music and Musical instruments used by different tribe groups are described by the author. But he did not mention the *Nashya Sheikh* people.

Objective of the Study:

The main objectives of the thesis are to discuss the *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal in historical perspectives. However, to traverse the *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal brief discussion of the Muslims in Bengal is apparent. The thesis also examines the nature of Islam as practised by the *Nashya Sheikh* with special reference to the concept of *Pirism* and *Mullaism*. It also discusses the course of population trends in North Bengal and West Bengal with specific reference to the *Nashya Sheikh* community of North Bengal. To converse the socio-economic life of the *Nashya Shiekh* with special reference to language, profession, Diet and Dress are also a part of the research in this thesis. The gender relations and position of Women in the *Nashya Sheikh* society in North Bengal is explored through the various discourses on the political and identity transformations of *Nashya Sheikh*. The thesis objective is also to make comparative study of the *Nashya Sheikh* community of different districts of North Bengal and the role of print and globalisation in developing an incipient awareness within the *Nashya Sheikh* community in Independent India.

Research Questions:

Some of the research questions posed in this research work are-

What was the socio-political force at work responsible for growth of Muslim society in Bengal in the colonial and post-colonial India? What was the historicity of *Nashya Sheikh* of North Bengal with special reference to its origin and development? What were the new characteristic features of Islam as practised by the *Nashya Sheikh* in North Bengal? What was the socio-economic life of the *Nashya Sheikh* and how it was different from other communities within Islam in North Bengal? What was the gender relations and position of Women in the *Nashya Sheikh* society? What has been the course of population trends in North Bengal and West Bengal with specific reference to the *Nashya Sheikh* community of North Bengal? What were the various discourses on the political and identity transformations of *Nashya Sheikh* in post-independent India? What was the impact of globalisation on the

Nashya Sheikh community of North Bengal? What is the role of print in developing an incipient awareness within the community in Independent India? What was the role of the State in bringing the marginalised *Nashya Sheikh* community in the mainstream of the Society?

Hypothesis:

The spread of Islam and the development of Muslims in Bengal were a multi-layered phenomenon and was a long process of gradual growth and the composition of the society quite naturally differed from century to century with the immigration of foreign Muslim and the conversion of local people. The Muslims from the six districts in North Bengal that is Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar constitute 25% of the total population of North Bengal and are the most important minority religious group in this region. The Muslims of North Bengal are closely correlated with each other in terms of religious belief, but there are scores of differences with regard to their language, culture, tradition, occupation etc. *Nashya Sheikh*, an indigenous Muslim community of North Bengal entered into the fold of Islam from the depressed section of the indigenous society and their entry was not through direct inducement but a self-propelled imitative action. The socio-economic condition of the *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims is miserable and deplorable when compared to the other Muslim communities and under the pressure of dominant cultures of the region and lack of consciousness this community is on the verge of jeopardize, portraying them socially, economically, culturally, educationally backward. The position of women in the *Nashya Sheikh* community is miserable because women are kept in oblivion and are devoid of any education. Girls were mostly married at a very early age, immediately after puberty and unilateral from of divorce and polygamy etc. are freely practised within this community. There is no social differentiation amongst the *Nashya Sheikh* community though they are grouped on the line of their lineages which is reflected in their surname. The age old

traditional political councils of *Nashya Sheikhs* known as *paich* or *Jamat* have lost their characteristic features due to modern politics and Panchayati system.

Research Methodology:

Research methodology is the process by which historians gather evidence and formulate ideas about the past. It is the framework through which an account of the proposed research is constructed. The prime objective of this research is to collect reliable data relevant to the research topic. The methodology used for this study is a “Mixed Methodology” which combines both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed method has been used to analyse both the primary and secondary data in order to gain an understanding of the study. The present research: *The Nashya Sheikh Community of North Bengal in the Twentieth Century: A Study of the Socio-Economic and Political Transformations* has been formulated on the basis of the nature of the study. The research methodology for the above proposal includes an extensive study of relevant literature, research method, and exemplars in the selected field of study. We also use the Qualities and Quantities data both primary and secondary. Important sources of information will be collected from the original sources available in various library of North Bengal, National library, interpretation of primary sources i.e., government records, non-government records, unpublished government and non-government records, journals, papers, and magazines will be done to substantiate the research hypothesis and questions.

Chapter Composition:

The present study is comprised of Six Chapters excluding Introduction and Conclusion. Each Chapter are intrinsically linked with each other and also are inconsonance with the broad design of the study.

First chapter deals with the growth and development of Muslim Society in Bengal. The study initiates how the Muslims came to India as well as West Bengal, how conversion takes place among the non-Muslim locals, various Sub-Communities under the Muslim Community in

West Bengal in particular and in India in general. The whole argument is substantiated with the socio-economic, political, and educational conditions of the Muslims of Bengal in Historical perspectives.

Second Chapter deals with the *Nashya Sheikhs* Community of North Bengal in historical perspectives. The core argument emphasizes on how the *Nashya Sheikh* community originated and grew in North Bengal and also describe how the Ethnic identity of *Nashya Sheikh* community developed in North Bengal.

Third chapter deals with the Islam as practiced by *Nashya Sheikhs* of North Bengal. The *Nashya Sheikh* Muslims certain customs and local practices are discussed at length and breadth and establish the argument how this particular community practiced popular Islam.

Fourth chapter deals with the social life of the *Nashya Sheikhs* of North Bengal: Past and Present. This chapter discusses the Social Structure of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal and makes a comparative study of their past and present condition.

Fifth chapter deals with the Economic Life and Political participation of the *Nashya Sheikhs*. This chapter divided into two sections, first section discusses the continuity and changes in the economic life of the *Nashya Sheikh* Community of North Bengal. Second section intricate the political participation and identity formation of the *Nashya Sheikh* community.

Six chapter deals with *Nashya Sheikh* and other Communities: A Comparative study between *Nashya Sheikh* and other community of North Bengal is discussed to examine the present condition of the community.

And lastly Conclusion deals with the major findings of the study, suggestions and recommendations of the Researcher.

Notes & References:

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¹⁴Ibid. pp.198-217.

¹⁵Ibid.p.127.

¹⁶Ibid. p.128.

¹⁷Rajib, Chatterjee, *Muslims of Darjeeling Himalaya: Aspects of their Economy, Society, Culture and Identity*, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Department of Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, West Bengal, pp.25-35.

¹⁸Ibid.p.36.

¹⁹Rahim, Mondal, *Dynamic of Muslim Society*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1994, pp.146-184.